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II

AN ETHNIC VIEW OF HIGHER EDUCATION [1]

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The conviction from which the remarks of this paper proceed is that the value, the means, and the methods of higher education, as of all education, can be rightly determined only by constant reference to its effect upon both the individual and the race, and that in all questions pertaining to this subject the present tendency is to give undue consideration to the individual. Suggested improvements of the course of study, discussion of the expediency and limits of the elective system, and attempts to solve the problem of articulating higher and secondary education reveal the fact that the needs and interests of those who are to be benefited immediately by college and university training are the primary objects of concern. The same narrow range of vision is betrayed in much of the current discussion of such questions as "Does a college education pay?" On the one hand it is asserted, for instance, that the individual profits by it, and on the other that it unfits him for business, as if these were conclusive arguments. But such problems of higher education are not primarily economic, and they cannot be settled by comparison of income and outlay. Socially or ethnically considered a college education may be a profitable investment even if it does not pay in dollars and cents, and if it unfits one for business it may be so much the worse for business. No educational question is strictly or chiefly individualistic. None can be finally settled without careful consideration of its bearing upon the interests of the race. Neglect of this consideration is sure to produce error and confusion in educational thought. "Most of the controversies relative to this great question of education," says Fouillée, "seem to me to be due to the fact that we fail to reach a sufficiently general point of view,

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i. e., the national, international, or even ethnical." We need therefore, both for practical and theoretical purposes, a new educational orientation. It is with the hope of contributing in some small degree to this orientation that I invite attention to an ethnic view of higher education.

Before considering higher education specially, we must glance briefly at education in general. What aspect does the nature and function of education as a whole present when considered from the standpoint of the race?

As soon as we contemplate education from the racial or ethnic point of view it reveals itself as fundamentally a process of social transformation. It represents the latest and, potentially if not actually, the most effective factor of social evolution. While it deals with individuals, its primary object is the progress of the race thru the improvement of its individual members. The goal of education is, therefore, not a single one, as is sometimes represented; it is double. It lies in the individual and in the race. In the education of the individual the goal is the maximum development of social efficiency. This involves the application of physiological and psychological principles to the development of mind and body. Hence the educational importance of physiology and experimental or psycho-physical psychology. In the education of the race the goal is the successive realization of higher and higher stages of humanity. "Given the hereditary merits and faults of a race," the problem of education becomes, as Guyau rightly stated it, "to what extent can we by education modify the existing heritage to the advantage of a new heritage?" This implies a knowledge of the means and methods of social evolution, the laws and causes of the social process. Hence the importance to the educator of social history and the science of sociology. Educational psychology should be racial as well as individual. The essential fact, however, is that education—elementary, secondary, and higher—is primarily a social or ethnic expedient for accelerating progress. All its problems are therefore social problems.

Another fact which, from this point of view, leaps to the eye, as the French say, is that, contrary to the hypothesis upon which

Rousseau and his followers have attempted to found a science of education, education is not a slavish imitation of nature, but an interference with so-called natural laws.[1] Its sole *raison d'être* is the inadequacy of nature's methods. It is the negation of *laissez faire* in individual and social evolution. The assistance it has rendered nature in the development of the individual is perfectly obvious, but its possibility as a social factor has only begun to be appreciated. Down to the present time it has acted almost wholly as a socially unconscious or genetic force in the evolution of the race. To be sure it has long been recognized as a means of social improvement, but there has been almost no attempt to use it scientifically in the development of a people as it is now used in the development of a person. Plato and the Spartans had the idea, but not the ideals and the science. Altho books on education are thick, and with regard to many of them I might add as light, as autumnal leaves, I know of but few worth mentioning which have urged its ordered application as a national, social, or ethnic lever. Its purposive use has not been consciously directed toward a social end; that is to say, educational teleology has been limited to the individual. The time has come, however, when it may be extended to the race. "Thru education," says Professor Dewey, "society can formulate its own purposes, can organize its own means and resources, and thus shape itself with definiteness and economy in the direction in which it wishes to move."

With this comprehensive view of education as a whole from the ethnic standpoint, we may now turn to the consideration of higher education. The first question that confronts us is, How are we to separate higher education from the work of the common schools, and what is the relation between them?

In the first place, higher education is, of course, a continuation of secondary education, as the latter is a continuation of elementary. They are all a part of the same process. And yet there is a difference, due to the necessary division of labor, between the function of higher education and the function of the common schools which, altho it may not justify an entirely separate classification, is yet sufficient to enable us to draw a pretty firm line between them. When we consider the work of the common schools we find that however clearly it perceives the educational ends, and however ambitious it may be to realize them, it is chiefly limited to the task of transmitting from one generation to another the mental, moral, and physical acquirements of the race. It preserves the racial inheritance. We have reached, for instance, a stage of civilization at which the average man is expected to be able to read, write, and cipher, to possess common morality and a certain amount of knowledge in regard to nature and man. Elementary and secondary education are devoted to the development of the efficiency represented by these acquirements and the assimilation of this knowledge. It has little time or opportunity for doing more than to maintain the average social level. On the other hand, higher education begins at this point and should be expected to raise it. It selects a comparatively small number of individuals, and professes to elevate their intelligence and efficiency to a higher power. Moreover, it has the opportunity to add new increments to the general stock of knowledge. The function of higher education is, therefore, especially that of providing the scientific and personal elements which are to urge the race onward to a new and higher stage of civilization. Elementary and secondary education are chiefly devoted, on account of their limitations, to the preservation of the social *status quo*. To higher education is given a superior opportunity of raising the social level. The one preserves order, the other secures progress. Elementary and secondary education, so far as social progress is concerned, are primarily static; higher education, dynamic. We thus see that there is a certain degree of similarity between the relation of higher education and the common schools and the relation of imitation and eccentricity or genius in the social world, heredity and variation in the biological world, and the centripetal and centrifugal forces in the physical world. It is not pretended, of course, that the parallelism is exact, but it may serve to throw into stronger relief the essentially dynamic function of higher education.

If the function of higher education, ethnically considered, is above all to contribute the socially progressive elements, then we may judge its present efficiency by the character and the amount of this contribution. The criterion cannot be successfully applied, however, unless we know beforehand what kind of social elements are progressive. This knowledge requires some conception of a goal toward which society should be directed, as well as an acquaintance with the methods of social evolution. It is therefore necessary to take these matters into consideration, and it may be helpful to begin by glancing for a moment at the nature of the evolutionary process in general.

Evolution, like education, is a continuous process, but it may be divided into natural and artificial evolution. As a wholly natural or subrational process it takes place independently of human volition, and is wholly determined by the adaptive force of the organism and the character of the environment. Given an organism, biological or social, that is, something capable of adapting itself, its natural evolution consists in its continuous adjustment to its environment, or in Spencerian phraseology, the adjustment of its internal relations to its external relations. The goal of natural evolution, that is, evolution not consciously directed, is perfect adaptation to environment, the equilibrium of the forces of nature and the forces of the organism. This goal has been reached in the biological world in the development of the higher animal forms, and in the social world in certain peoples who have apparently reached a stationary state. Its method is the preservation, perpetuation, and improvement of such variations in the organism as tend to perfect its adaptation; that is, natural selection. Now in such evolution progressive elements can only be, first, such increments of force as may be added to the adaptive power of the organism, the *vis a tergo* which pushes it on and produces its variations, and, second, those special variations in the existing type which by bringing the organism one degree nearer perfection, *i. e.*, perfect adaptation, are, so to speak, seized upon, preserved and perpetuated by natural selection. The variations, we say, are spontaneous. They merely happen to take place. They are also innumerable, and the vast majority of them, being non-advantageous, are utterly useless to progress, and represent pure waste of vital force. It is only by chance that some of them serve the purpose of nature. Hence it is that natural evolution, biological and social, is a most extravagant and unnecessarily slow process, and furnishes no model for intelligent action in physical, moral, or mental training, or in any other sphere of action. Observe now the difference between natural evolution and artificial evolution, in which higher education plays a part.

In artificial evolution the goal is no longer fixed by natural circumstances. It is predetermined by man; it is ideal. If the environment is not suitable to the development of the ideal type, the environment is changed. This is all that cultivation in agriculture and horticulture amounts to. Again, the progressive variations of type are not left to chance, but are ideally conceived, and effort is made to produce them. This is illustrated in the breeding of stock. The result is that more is accomplished in artificial than in natural evolution by the same expenditure of energy. Waste is diminished, the ultimate object being its complete elimination. Evolution having become a conscious process it is ruled by the intellect. The laws of nature are not disregarded; they are counteracted or overruled, just as the law of gravitation is overruled in the construction of an Eiffel's Tower. The difference between artificial evolution and natural evolution is the difference between science and empiricism, between intelligently purposive action and fortuity. It may be described in a single word—economy.

As was said before, social evolution down to the present time has been almost entirely a natural process. Christian philosophy, poets, and social dreamers have projected indistinct, or too distinct, goals of social development, but none of them has been made the basis of scientific attempts at social improvement. Social environment has been changed, but not with the conscious purpose of molding the race into any definite and scientifically preconceived form. Special energy has been expended upon the development of innumerable variations of type, but little attention has been given to the kind of type that would serve the purpose of natural or artificial selection. Many are called, but few are chosen. Under the influence of education the whole process may become artificial.

When this is the case the number of progressive elements is increased. They will then be as follows: First, socially purposive modifications of the social environment; second, new increments of social adaptive power, or racial virility; third, new increments of knowledge, and fourth, select individual types embodying virility and knowledge and which, being lifted up by higher education, will draw all men unto them, that is, will raise the social level.

We are now ready to apply the ethnic test to higher education. What is it doing toward contributing these various elements? This, of course, cannot be described within the limits of this paper. All that can be done is to offer a few criticisms in regard to its contribution to each element.

In the first place, then, higher education, instead of encouraging purposive changes in social environment, is a partisan and an apologist of the present order. It is not its function, of course, to introduce these changes directly. It can only provide the knowledge and the spirit, and leave the initiative to scientific legislation. But academic atmosphere is not always healthful to the growth of this knowledge and spirit. Much has been said about liberty of thought in our colleges and universities. It is contended by the authorities that there is complete liberty, and the claim is logical, for they make a careful distinction between liberty and license. Thought is free so long as it is sound, and the authorities have their own convictions in regard to what constitutes sound thinking. While freedom of thought is doubtless increasing in all our higher institutions of learning, and will continue to increase as they become more conscious of their social function, yet it is probably true to-day that there is not a college or university in the country that would long tolerate an active and formidable advocate of serious changes in the present social order. He would be required to go, and the occasion of his removal would not be avowed as opposition to intellectual liberty, but to his own incapacity, as evidenced by his vagarious opinions. This to the educational martyr is the unkindest cut of all. It is his sorrow's crown of sorrow.

Owing partly to the feeling in college and university circles that one is lucky to have been born a conservative, there has been developed a sort of typical academic attitude in regard to almost all questions of serious social importance. In political parlance this attitude is called a straddle, but the euphemistic phrase is scientific impartiality. There is a certain type of university professor, for instance, who never expresses his own opinion, claims indeed that he has none. In considering a given question he devotes himself to the accumulation of evidence, pro and con, and being unable to determine which pile is the larger, he stands as immovable as the traditional donkey between two stacks of hay. He speaks condescendingly of the *οἱ πολλοί*. His contempt for enthusiasm is profound. He insincerely professes to envy the man who can arrive at a conclusion, but as for himself he sees so deeply and finds so much argument on both sides of every question that he is always in doubt. Like Lowell's candidate in the *Biglow Papers,* his

> "Mind's tu fair to lose its balance
> And say which party has most sense,
> There may be folks of greater talence
> That can't set stiddier on the fence."

This type of university man has done much to give to higher education the reputation of futility. His attitude helps to explain why it is that in the popular mind it is sufficent to condemn a theory or an argument to describe it as "merely academic." It is expected that academic discussion is likely to come out at the selfsame door wherein it went. We recognize, of course, that higher education must encourage impartiality in investigation and conservatism in social proposals, but there is a golden mean. The true scientific spirit, which is so badly needed in every department of thought, does not imply absence of enthusiasm, but only the restraint of sentiment while investigation is in progress. In matters of social advancement, higher education should be the source of a conservative radicalism.

In regard to the second progressive element mentioned, namely, increase in race virility, higher education may claim to contribute something on account of the prominence it gives athletics. But just how much good the selection and probable overtraining of a few individuals who need physical culture least is going to do the race it is somewhat difficult to estimate. The respect engendered for physical prowess is worth something, and the shouting of the otherwise passive spectators at the games may have its value in raising the average of physical vigor. It is a fair criticism, however, to say that the method would not commend itself to a thoroly self-conscious race as the best means of promoting its progress. Few colleges and universities, with all their interest in the subject, are really conscious of the social value of athletics. The end and aim is not racial culture, but the winning of the championship. As to other methods of strengthening the human stock, they are not so much as heard of. It is too early to talk of a scientific stirpiculture, but higher education might do much toward the creation of a sentiment that will finally bring into operation the law of social selection, or the birth of the fittest. But this is not in its consciousness. So far then as contributing to the virility of the race is concerned, higher education falls far short of its opportunity.

When we come to consider the increments of knowledge provided by higher education, they are so numerous and important that it may seem in this respect to be completely fulfilling its function. It would be easy to name a long list of academic discoveries which have proved to be invaluable. There are two criticisms, however, which are at once suggested by an ethnic view of the subject. In the first place, knowledge is accumulated without regard to its possible social utilization. Much of it is, therefore, not appreciably dynamic. All knowledge is valuable, but all is not equally valuable. Higher education seems to proceed on the assumption that one discovery is as good as another. An illustration of what I mean may be found in the doctors' theses of our various universities. Many of them are on such subjects as the final "e" in Chaucer, or the dative case in Sallust, which, however important from a linguistic standpoint, are not of present and pressing importance to the race. Some of them represent toilsome pursuit of insignificant bits of knowledge which, when found, are about as valuable to society as the individual acquirement of the power to balance a straw on one's nose. In the second place, higher education over-emphasizes the importance of original investigation in comparison with intellectual organization and distribution. Its rewards are for the investigator. It is almost as much as a scholar's reputation is worth to undertake to popularize his knowledge. And yet the successful distributor of knowledge performs a vastly more important social service than the average original investigator. Many college and university professors hold their positions, not because they are teachers, but because they have hunted down some more or less important bit of knowledge. This is why some of the worst possible teaching may be found in our universities. Some of us know by painful experience that this is true. These two defects in higher education an ethnic view will tend to remedy.

The last in the list of progressive elements which were mentioned as rightfully to be expected from higher education were cultured personalities specially adapted to the task of elevating the race to a higher plane of civilization. Here again much might be said in regard to what has been done. The roll of names of college men who have helped the world forward is a long one. But after all, this contribution has been largely unconscious and incidental. These personalities have been developed primarily for themselves, and not for the race. Their social utility was accidental. They were, so to speak, spontaneous variations. The spirit of higher education is still individualistic. The one hundred and fifty thousand young men and young women now in our higher institutions of learning are being trained not primarily for social service, but for success, and if statistics show that the majority of them succeed, higher education is content. But success is sometimes the very opposite of social service. The fact, therefore, that so many college men succeed may be a severe reflection on our colleges. It may indicate that their students are trained merely to exploit their fellow-men. The race is not interested primarily in anyone's success, but in the manner of his success. Does he produce healthful commodities? Does he increase wealth or illth? Does he promote life or death? Does he make the world a better place in which to live? These are the questions in which the race is interested. It sanctions the exploitation of nature, but it condemns the exploitation of man.

The whole criticism of higher education from the ethnic point of view may be summed up in a very few words. It is loosely organized from the standpoint of social economy. It is too conservative in everything but religion. It grinds out knowledge with almost contemptuous indifference to its social timeliness and use. More time is given, for instance, to the study of entomology than to the study of anthropology, to the study of insects than to the study of men. Domestic science and sociology receive less consideration than Latin and Greek. It turns out men and women with highly trained powers, but often without the spirit to use these powers in conscious service of the race. It is significant that the church is expected to provide this spirit by conversion. (The truly educated man requires no conversion) In evolutionary terminology the variations emphasized and produced by higher education are socially advantageous only when they happen to be so. There is, therefore, too much waste. In a word, higher education acts unconsciously as an ethnic force. It is still under the sway of natural evolution. It illustrates the economy of nature and not the economy of mind.

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